

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5381

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FOR THE SECRETARY FROM THE AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: MASS, US, JO

SUBJECT: HAWK MISSILE SALE: CONVERSATION WITH PRIME MINISTER

1. RIFAI ASKED ME TO SEE HIM MORNING AUGUST 18. WE DISCUSSED SECVISIT FOR A FEW MINUTES (SEPTTEL).

2. HE THEN ASKED ME ABOUT THE PRESNET CLIMATE ON THE HAWK MISSILE SALE. I SAID I HAD HEARD NOTHING TO CHANGE MY VIEW THAT IS WAS ABOUT WHERE WE LEFT IT IN JULY. THE SALE WAS FAR FROM WRAPPED UP, BUT THAT THE EVENTS OF THE NEXT SEVERAL WEEKS WOULD BE MOST IMPORTANT. WHEN I LEFT WASHINGTON IT WAS CLEAR THAT THE SFRC DID NOT WANT TO PUSH THE ISSUE TO A VOTE. RIFAI SAID THAT HE HAD RECIEVED PRIVATE WORK THAT THE ISSUE WAS LOST. I ASKED IF HE COULD NAME THE SOURCE, AND HE SAID IT WAS PERSONAL INFORMATION. (COMMENT: IN RETROSPECT I BELIEVE THIS COULD HAVE BEEN MERELY A FEELER, OR PERHAPS THE SOURCE WAS THE SOVIET "SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE" -- SEE BELOW. END COMMENT).

3. RESPONDING I SAID THAT ANYONE WHO PRESUMED TO KNOW WAS SUSPECT SINCE THE EVENTS OF THE NEXT FEW WEEKS COULD BE EXTREMELY IMPORTANT TO THE FUTURE OF THE SALE. I DID NOT WANT TO DISCOUNT THE PROBLEMS WE HAD EXPERIENCED, MEITHER DID I THINK UNDUE PESSIMISM WAS THE ANSWER.

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I ADDED I CERTAINLY HOPED THAT NOTHING WOULD HAPPEN ON

THEIR VISIT TO SYRIA WHICH WOULD GIVE THE SALE'S OPPONENTS AN OPPORTUNITY TO INVIGORATE THE ATTACK. RIFAI SAID HE WAS RELIEVED AND THEN ASKED IF THE SALE GETS BLOCKED, COULD THEY HAVE ASSURANCES THAT JORDAN COULD GO AHEAD AND BUY THE HAWKS COMMERCIALY. I INDICATED THAT PERSONALLY I FELT THAT NO OPTIONS SHOULD BE FORECLOSED PREMATURELY, BUT NEITHER SHOULD OR COULD WE SETTLE ON A GAME PLAN FOR FUTURE CONTINGENCIES IN THE ABSENCE OF KNOWING A LITTLE BIT MORE ABOUT WHAT THE SITUATION IN THE CONGRESS AND IN THE AREA MIGHT BE AT THE TIME WE HAD TO DECIDE ON THIS POINT. IN ANY EVENT WITH YOUR TRIP COMING UP, THE WHOLE QUESTION SHOULD BE DISCUSSED THOROUGHLY WITH YOU, INCLUDING THE FUTURE RANGE OF OPTIONS OPEN TO US. BY ALL MEANS THE ADMINISTRATION WAS COMMITTED TO THE SALE AND WHAT WE WOULD DO IF THE PRESENT POSSIBILITY OF AN FMS SALE WAS FORECLOSED BY CONGRESS WOULD BE IN THE SPIRIT OF THAT COMMITMENT. RIFAI SEEMED PLEASED WITH THIS APPROACH. I SAID I WOULD REPORT OUR CONVERSATION IMMEDIATELY SO YOU WOULD KNOW OF HIS INTEREST AND CONCER.

4. HE THEN TOLD ME THAT THE SOVIETS HAS SENT AN OFFICIAL TO TALK WITH THEM UNDER "PRAVDA" COVER. THEY PRESUMED HE WAS A HIGH-LEVEL KGB OFFICER. HE HAD ABOUT THREE HOURS WITH THE KING YESTERDAY AND HAD AGAIN SURFACED THE SOVIET INTEREST IN SELLING JORDAN AN AIR DEFENSE SYSTEM. THE JORDANIANS HAD AGAIN (ACCORDING TO RIFAI) HELD HIM OFF. I ASKED IF THE DISCUSSION HAD BEEN SPECIFIC AND WHETHER PRICES AND AVAILABILITY HAD BEEN MENTIONED. RIFAI SAID NO THAT HAD NOT HAPPENED. I THEN SAID THAT WE APPRECIATED THEIR ACTION IN KEEPING THE DOOR OPEN FOR THE HAWK SALE BY WAITING THE ADDITIONAL TIME. RIFAI JUMPED IN WITH THE COMMENT THAT SUCH AN ACTION WAS THE LEAST THEY COULD DO UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES. THE SOVIET SALE WAS THE WORST ALTERNATIVE AND THEY WANTED TO TRY TO AVOID IT IF THEY POSSIBLY COULD DO SO. THAT IS WHY HE IS EXPLORING ALTERNATIVES WITH US IF THE PRESENT ARRANGEMENT SHOULD FALL THROUGH.

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5. SUBSEQUENTLY, RIFAI SHOWED ME THE TEXT OF A LETTER THE KING IS PROPOSING TO SEND TO ALL SENATORS AND THE MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE LEADERSHIP, INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE AND RULES COMMITTEE. HE ASKED IF I THOUGHT THE KING SHOULD ALSO SEND THE LETTER TO THE CONFIRMED OPPONENTS -- CASE, ETC. MY REPLY WAS THAT IF THE LETTER DID NOT THREATEN OR COULD NOT BE TURNED

AGAINST THE SALE IN THAT SENSE, THEN IT MIGHT BE
BETTER TO TREAT THE SENATE AS A GROUP RATHER THAN
TRYING TO BE SELECTIVE. THOSE WHO DID NOT RECEIVE THE
LETTER ON THE PREMISE THEY WERE AGAINST THE SALE
MIGHT RESNET IT AND THE IMPLICATION THEY DID NOT
HAVE AN OPEN MIND OR WERE NOT FLEXIBLE.

6. THE LETTER IS REASONABLY TOUGH, BUT NOT THREATENING.
THE KING SPEAKS PLAINLY AND FRANKLY AND RAISES THE
SOVIET ALTERNATIVE AS THE ONLY PRACTICAL RECOURSE,
BUT IN A "MORE IN SORROW THAN IN ANGER" VEIN.
HE SPEAKS PLAINLY ABOUT HIS FEARS OF ISRAELI ATTACK,
BUT EMPHASIZES THE NON-AGGRESSIVE CHARACTER OF JORDAN-
IAN POLICY. I HAVE NOT TRIED TO ARGUE AGAINST THE
LETTER ON THE THESIS THAT THIS IS A CHOICE THE KING
HAS TO MAKE ON HIS OWN. HE IS WELL AWARE OF OUR FEARS
OF POSSIBLE BACKLASH ON THIS KIND OF THING.
RIFAI SAID THAT KING FEELS HE SHOULD LEAVE HIS
FRIENDS IN CONGRESS UNDER NO DOUBT ABOUT HIS PERSONAL
VIEWS AND STAND, IMPLYING THAT HE WOULD DO SO EVEN
IF IT MIGHT HURT KING SOMEWHAT WITH ONE PART OF THE
CONGRESS.
PICKERING

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